

THE

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# HAPPY WATERMAN.



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## The HAPPY WATERMAN.

A Gentleman and lady walking on the banks of the river Thames, spied a small ferry boat with a neatly dressed waterman rowing towards them: on his nearer approach, they read on the stem of his boat, these Words, THE HAPPY WATERMAN.— Without taking any notice of it, they determined to enter into conversation with him, and enquiring into his situation in life, they found that he had a wife and five children, and supported also an old father and mother-in-law by his own labour. The gentleman and lady were upon this still more surprised at the title he had given himself, and said, “my friend if this is your situation, how is it that you call yourself the happy waterman?” “I can easily explain this to your satisfaction,” answered the young man, “if you will give me leave;” and they desiring him to proceed, he spoke as follows: “I have observed that our greatest blessings in life are often looked upon as the greatest distresses, and are in fact made such by means of imprudent conduct. My father and mother died a few years ago, and left a large



a large family; my father was a waterman, and I was his assistant in the management of a ferry-boat, by which he supported his family; on his death, it was necessary (in order to pay his just debts) to sell our boat! I parted from it—even with tears—but the distress that I felt spurred me on to industry, for I said, I will use every kind of diligence to purchase my boat back again. I went to the person who had bought it, and told him my design: he had given five guineas for it, but told me, as I was once the owner, that I should have it when ever I could raise five pounds. “Shall the boat be mine again?” said I; my heart bounded at the thought?”

“I was this time married to a good young woman, and we lived in a neighbouring cottage; she was young, healthy, and industrious, and so was I, and we loved one another.—What might we not undertake? my father used to say to me, Always do what is right; labour diligently and spend your money carefully; and God will bless your store. We treasured up these rules, and determined to try the truth of them. My wife had long chiefly supported two aged parents; I loved them as my own—and the desire of contributing to their support, was an additional spur to my endeavours to re-purchase the boat. I entered myself as a day labourer, in the garden of our squire; and my wife was called

occasionally to perform some services at the house, and employed herself in needle work, spinning or knitting at home; not a moment in the day was suffered to pass unemployed—we spared for ourselves and furnished all the comforts we could to the poor about us—and every week we dropped a little overplus into a saving box—to buy the BOAT. If any accident or charity brought us an additional shilling, we did not enlarge our expence, but kept it for the BOAT. The more care we took, the more comfortable we felt, for we were the nearer the possession of our little BOAT. Our labour was lightened, by our looking forward to the attainment of our wishes. Our family indeed increased, but with it our friends increased also, for the cleanliness and frugality which furnished our cottage, and the content and chearfulness that appeared in it, drew the notice of our rich neighbours; of my master and mistress particularly, whose rule was to assist the industrious, but not to encourage the idle. They did not approve of giving money to the poor; but in cold winters, or dead times, allowed us to buy things at a cheaper rate; this was *money to us*, for when we counted our little cash for the week's marketing, all that was saved to us by our tickets to purchase things at reduced prices went into our "little box." If my children got a penny at school for a  
reward



reward to buy gingerbread; they brought it home, they said, to help to buy the Boat—for they would have no gingerbread till daddy had got his boat again! Thus from time to time our little store insensibly increased, till one pound only was wanting of the five, when the following accident happened: Coming home one evening from my work, I saw in my road a small pocket-book: on opening it, I found a bank note of ten pounds, which plainly enough belonged to my master, for his name was upon it, and I had also seen him passing that way in the evening: at being too late however to return to the house, I went on my way. When I told my family of the accident, the little ones were thrown into a transport of joy. My dears, said I, what is the matter? "Oh, daddy, the boat! the boat! we may now have two or three boats!" I checked them, by my looks, and asked them if they recollected whose money that was? they said, "yours, as you found it." I reminded them that I was not the real owner, and bid them think how they would all feel supposing a stranger was to take our box of money if I should happen to drop it on the day I went to buy back the boat. This thought had the effect on their young minds that I desired: they were silent, and pale with the representation of such a disaster: and I begged it might be a lesson

lesson to them never to forget the golden rule of "doing as they would wish others to do to them; for by attention to this certain guide, no one would ever do wrong to another. I also took the opportunity, to explain to them that the possession of the BOAT by dishonest means would never answer, since we could not expect the blessing of God upon *bad deeds*.

To go on with my story—the next morning I put the pocket book into my bosom, and went to my work, intending as soon as the family rose to give it to my master but what were my feelings, when, on searching in my bosom, it was no where to be found. I hastened back, along the road I came, looking diligently all the way, but, in vain! there was no traces of any such thing—I would not return into my cottage because I wished to save my family the pain I felt, and in the hope of still recovering the book, I went to my work, following another path which I also recollected I had gone by; on my return to the garden gate, I was accosted by the gardener, who, in a threatening tone told me, I was suspected; that our master had lost a pocket-book, describing what I had found, and that I being the only man absent from the garden at the hour of work, the rest of the men also denying that they had any such thing, there was every reason to conclude that I must have got it.

Before



Before I could answer, my disstified countenance confirmed the suspicion! and another servant coming up, said I was detected, for that a person had been sent to my house, and that my wife and family had owned it all, and had described the pocket book. I told them the real fact, but it seemed to every one unlikely to be true; every circumstance was against me, and my heart trembles to look back upon it! I was arrested, and hurried away to prison! I protested my innocence, but I did not wonder that I gained no credit! Great grief now oppressed my heart! my poor wife, my dear children, and my gray headed parents, were all at once plunged into want and misery, instead of the ease and happiness which we were expecting; for we were just arriving at the height of our earthly wishes! I had, however, one consolation left, that I knew *I was innocent*; and I trusted that by "persevering in honesty," all might come right at last; My resolution was, as I had certainly been the cause, tho' without any design of the second loss of the property, that I would offer (alas!) the whole of our little store, to make it good as far as in my power; and I sent for my wife to give her this sad commission, but she informed me that even this sacrifice, could be of no avail, for, said she, my master has been at our cottage, when I told him freely how you had found the note, but unfortunately

nately had lost it again; and I added, that I was sure both I and my husband would make the best return in our power, after which I produced our little saving box, and begged him to accept the contents, which had been so long raising, as all we had to offer; But, Sir, said the Waterman, conceive my agony, when she added, that my master angrily refused, saying that our being in possession of all that money was of itself the clearest proof of my guilt; for it was impossible, with my large family, and no greater opportunities than my neighbours, that I could come honestly by such a sum; therefore he was determined to keep me in gaol till I should pay the whole. My unhappiness was very great; however my mind by degrees began to be more easy, for I grew confident that I should not trust in God and my own innocence in vain:—and so it happened, one of my fellow labourers proved to be the person who had picked up the note after I had dropped it, having come a few minutes after me along the same road to his work; and hearing that the suspicion had fallen altogether on me, he was tempted to turn the accident to his own advantage, and conceal the property; which having kept in his own box for a few weeks, till he thought no suspicion would rest upon him, he went and offered the note for change in London and soon all was over and



and being then suspected, my master had him taken up, and I was released.

This second change from so much misery to happiness was almost too much for us: My master sent for me, with many expressions of concern for what had passed, made me give him an account of the means by which I had collected the little fund, that fixed his suspicion so strongly upon me! I accordingly related the history of it as I have now done; and when I came to that part where I checked my children for their inconsiderate joy on my finding the note, he rose with much kindness in his looks, and putting the bank bill into my hand, he said, "Take it!—the bank note shall be theirs. It is the best and only return I can make you, as well as a just reward of your honesty; and it will be a substantial proof to your children of the goodness of your instructions, for they will thus early see, and feel the benefit of honesty and virtue;"

This kind and worthy gentleman interested himself much in the purchase of my boat, which, in less than a week I was in full possession of. The remainder of my master's bounty, and the additional advantage of the ferry, has placed me in comfortable circumstances; which I humbly trust in God will continue to us as long as we continue our labour and honest diligence; and I can say from my long experience

rience that the fruit of our own industry is always the sweetest. I have now also the pleasure of being able to help others, for when a rich passenger takes the ferry, as my story is well known in the neighbourhood, he often gives me more than my fare, which enables me to let the next poor person go over for half price.

The lady and gentleman were extremely pleased with the waterman's story, and willingly joined in calling him the HAPPY WATERMAN. They passed over in his ferry-boat for the sake of making him an handsome present. And from this time, becoming acquainted with his family, they did them every service in their power, giving books and schooling to their little ones, and every comfort to the old father and mother-in-law as long as they survived. They were very desirous of knowing what became of the unfortunat fellow labourer, who had so dreadfully gone aside from the principles of honesty, and they learnt that he was, after a short imprisonment, set at liberty by his master at the earnest entreaty of the honest waterman, as he said it was partly thro' his carelessness in losing the note, that the temptation had fallen in his fellow labourer's way: he had moreover a very large family, his master also was so good as to consider that he was a man who had not been blessed with a good education in his youth,



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so that having little fear of God before his eyes, and having a great temptation in his way, he had been the more easily led to commit this very wicked action, by which he would have enriched himself at the expence of an innocent man. I have a great pleasure in adding that the thought of what he had done, together with the generosity of the waterman, had so strong an effect upon this poor fellow, that he afterwards had it written upon his cottage door, DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE UNTO. And he hath resolved to follow this rule himself in future, and also taught it to his children: indeed it became a rule well known over the whole parish, for every little child having been informed of this story, was told that he ought to consider before he did any action, whether he would like his brother, or sister, or school fellow to do the same to him; and if not, that the action was wrong, and not to be done, let the profit be ever so great. Surely then, those who have lived long and seen much of life, and have had much religious instruction also, should never depart from this simple but certain rule. And it is the same to all ranks—it requires neither learning or abilities to “do as you would be done unto,” nor can any station however great, no nor any circumstances however trying, excite men from giving their constant attention to it.

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